



For immediate release

Risk of home heating fires rises as temperatures drop *Officials urge caution as most dangerous period begins*

December 4, 2007 (Washington, D.C.) – As outdoor temperatures drop and people across the nation take measures to keep themselves and their loved ones warm this winter, fire incidents involving heating equipment are expected to rise. According to a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) report released today, heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires and nearly half of all home fires occur in December, January and February.

According to NFPA, in 2005, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 62,200 reported home structure fires, 670 civilian deaths, 1,550 civilian injuries, and \$909 million in direct property damage.

“Heating a home to a comfortable temperature is something we would like everyone to be able to accomplish without it resulting in a tragic fire,” said Acting Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Chairman Nancy Nord. “It is important that heating equipment is properly used and maintained. Fires often start when heaters are left too close to things that can burn. Consumers can protect themselves by making sure that space heaters or other equipment are not too close to clothing, mattresses, bedding, cushioned furniture or other things that might ignite.”

Today, at a joint press conference, the CPSC, NFPA, and U.S. Fire Administration (UFSA) urged consumers to be vigilant about fire prevention and safety in the days and weeks ahead, and stressed caution when heating equipment is involved.

The NFPA report found that although fires were more likely to begin in chimneys or chimney connectors, usually because they were not cleaned, fires involving space heaters were the most deadly. While space heaters were involved in only one-third of heating fires, they accounted for three-fourths of the fires deaths. Most fires involving space heaters began when equipment was left too close to something that ignited. The peak time for home heating fires is between 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

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NFPA and CPSC recommend the following heating safety tips:

- Space heaters need space. Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Turn portable heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked, frayed or broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.
- Have your chimney inspected each year and cleaned if necessary.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a metal container.
- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For the best protection interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home — when one sounds, they all sound. Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.
- For fuel assistance, contact the National Fuel Funds Network at 1-202-824-0660.

NFPA has introduced two new heating safety campaigns to help spread this lifesaving message this winter. Every fire department in the country recently received “Keeping Your Community Safe and Warm”, a toolkit of support materials to help them conduct successful heating-safety campaigns in their communities and NFPA worked with Scholastic to reach nearly 5 million families through schools around the country with take home materials and activities aimed at reducing the number of home heating fires.

For more information on either of these campaigns contact: public_affairs@nfpa.org.

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NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training and education. Visit NFPA's Web site at www.nfpa.org.

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